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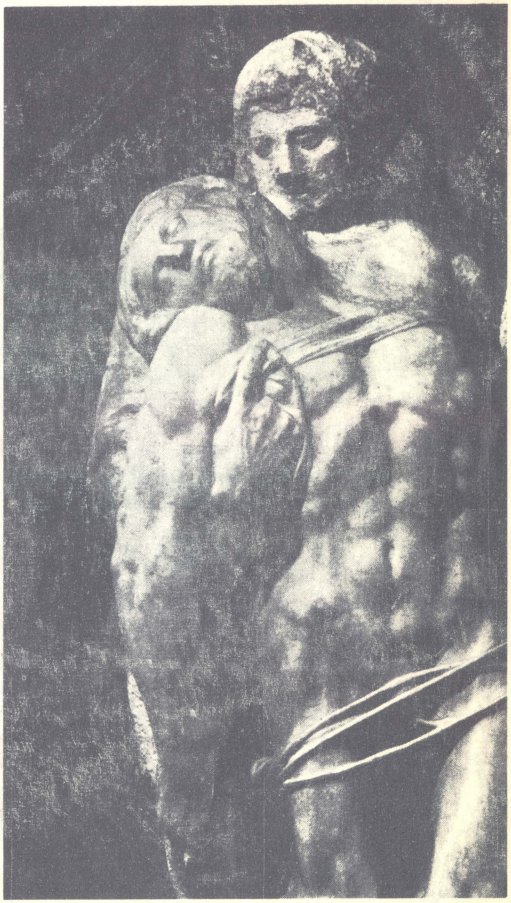
MESSIAH



HANDEL

LONDON

George Frederick Handel

Of the many distinguished musicians who have made England their home in days gone by, none can surely have been greater than George Frederick Handel. Esteemed during the early part of his life for his Italian Operas, his popularity reached unprecedented heights when he began to compose the great sacred works which have ensured him his enormous reputation with succeeding generations.

The great composer was born at Halle, Germany, into the unmusical family of a ducal barber on 23rd. February, 1685 — the same year in which Bach was born. The elder Handel had no thought of a musical career for his son and accordingly sent him to study law, only allowing him musical instruction as a sideline. However Handel soon became so proficient that he was appointed organist at a church in his home town, a position he retained until the death of his father in 1703, when he resolved to leave Halle and try his fortunes elsewhere.

Arriving at Hamburg, his chosen destination, Handel at once secured a position in the orchestra of one Reinhard Keiser, a composer who was having great success with the series of operas he was producing. This experience undoubtedly was of great value to the young man who was destined to produce so many operas himself. Whilst at Hamburg Handel wrote his first three stage works — *Almira, Nero* and *Florinda.*

After three years at Hamburg, Handel went on an extended tour of Italy, where he absorbed much valuable information about the Italian style of composition as well as scoring further operatic successes. In 1710 he was appointed Court Conductor to the Elector of Hanover, but in the following year he departed for London to witness the first production of his opera *Rinaldo.* This was so successful that he decided to remain there for the rest of his life.

This he did—with the exception of a brief return visit to Hanover in 1712—and the record of his career from then until about 1728 is one of a continuous line of repeated operatic successes. In addition to this some important orchestral compositions—notably the *Chandos Anthems* and the *Water Music*—belong to this period, and 1721 saw the production of his first oratorio, *Esther.*

But by 1728 serious trouble had begun to appear in the form of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera,* the success of which was proving seriously detrimental to the vogue for Italian Opera. Throughout the next ten years Handel strove to postpone the eventual inevitable collapse of the opera by visiting Italy periodically to search for new works and fresh singers. For a while he was successful, but by 1737 both Handel's own company and the one directed by his rival Niccolo Porpora were in dire financial straits and the composer himself was gravely ill from a stroke.

Fortunately Handel had had sufficient sense to realize that opera was doomed in the long run, and from 1732 onwards had devoted increasing energies to his sacred compositions, further supplementing his income with organ recitals—a capacity in which he was in great demand. So, after recuperating from his illness at Aix-la-Chapelle, Handel embarked on a period of artistic glory that was to see the production of his finest choral works. The well-known *Israel in Egypt* appeared in 1739, to be followed in 1740 by *L'Allegro, il Penseroso, ed il Moderato.*

Then in 1741 came the great oratorio that was to become perhaps the best-loved choral work in the entire repertoire—the wonderful *Messiah*. Composed during August and September of that year, the work was first performed in Dublin on 13th April, 1742. It scored an immediate success, ensuring Handel so great a reputation as a church composer with succeeding generations that his operas eventually fell into comparative disregard.

Messiah was followed by *Samson* in 1743, and of the works produced in the ensuing seven years *Semele, Judas Maccabeus* and *Solomon* deserve special mention. Last of the proud series came *Jephtha*, during the composition of which the unfortunate composer was stricken with blindness.

Although he was to live on for several more years yet, committing his last music to paper by means of his amanuensis, Handel's life's work was done. He died at last on 14th April, 1759, and his remains were interred in Westminster Abbey, where a memorial tableau showing him poring, pen in hand, over a page from *Messiah* commemorates one of England's best loved composers and his best-loved work.

Messiah

Shortly before *Messiah* was first produced in Dublin on 13 April 1742, Charles Jennens, the compiler of the libretto, sent the following text, to be printed at the head of the word-book of the oratorio:

> And without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness; God was manifested in the Flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in Glory. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

These words typify the spirit in which *Messiah* was created. Immediately after the Overture we are told of the comfort which our Lord's coming will bring and the chorus tells of the Glory of the Lord that will be revealed. The awe of this phophecy is stressed, as is the darkness of the world before the coming of our Saviour. The chorus rejoices at the birth of the Child, and a dramatic picture is painted of the Nativity. The true meaning and reason of His Birth is revealed in the final air and chorus of the first part.

In the second part we share in the poignancy of the Passion, not as a present tragedy, but as an everlasting drama. Here are described the spiritual sufferings rather than the agony of the body, and it is through the purging quality of these sufferings that the Resurrection is achieved. Then comes the spreading of the Gospel, based upon this life of sacrifice which ended in the Ascension. The nations who have failed to learn its lesson, who still rage furiously together, will be broken by their own folly. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Finally we are given a vision of the Last Judgment and the song of praise of the Angelic host.

In the painting of this epic musical canvas Handel's touch never deserts him. The drama of the shepherds' vision and the mocking of Christ are achieved equally without descending from the epic plane and always by the simplest of means. Perhaps the greatest stroke of genius occurs after the Hallelujah Chorus, when it would seem that nothing could follow this vision of the Heavenly Host. What seems an unsurpassable musical climax has been reached, yet Handel can move us even more greatly in his moments of quiet simplicity. With the air "I know that my Redeemer liveth" he discloses the deep-seated and enduring spring of his faith, a faith that receives its final and universal statement in the monumental "Amen" with which the oratorio closes.

* * *

From Handel's autograph score we learn that the composition of *Messiah* was begun on 22 August and completed on 12 September, 1741, the instrumentation being finished two days later. It is probable that even before the first performance in Dublin Handel had made alterations to suit the abilities of the singers at his disposal. After this first performance he certainly composed many new settings to display the vocal capacities of the singers he engaged for later performances. In this matter Handel was essentially an improviser, and therefore what he left of *Messiah* on paper was intended for his own use rather than to provide an authoritative text of the work for posterity. There is, indeed, no evidence to show that he thought any paricular version an improvement on its alternative, and when, after his death, the full score was published for the first time, the main text followed his original autograph, with the later alternative versions given as an appendix.

This, however, is not Handel's *Messiah* as it has been traditionally given for the last century and a half. It seems likely that the version of the oratorio we know today is based on a performance which Mozart gave with 'additional accompaniments' in 1789 in Vienna, in a hall where no organ was available. Mozart's score, with additions by other hands (since the Vienna performance was incomplete) was published a dozen years after his death, and seems quickly to have displaced earlier editions. Certainly one can approve wholeheartedly Mozart's choice as regards the alternative versions, and since they have also been sanctioned by tradition there is every reason for accepting them. But there is also every reason for returning to Handel's original instrumentation and for correcting the numerous textural errors that have crept into the music during the last two centuries, and this has been done in this present recording.

In one instance recent tradition has been disregarded, but with Handel's authority. The four 'Passion' numbers ("Thy rebuke" to "But Thou didst not leave") were written by Handel in the tenor clef in the autograph score, but above "Thy rebuke" stands the name "S(igno)ra Avolio", the soprano singer whom Handel brought over from London for his Dublin performances. Joan Sutherland therefore has justification in laying claim to this recitative and the following air. Miss Sutherland has also challenged tradition by ornamenting her vocal line more than is usual in Handelian oratorio today. Certainly Italian opera singers of the eighteenth century were judged by their ability to 'grace' a melody, particularly in the repeated section of a *da capo* aria. Yet there may be equal significance in the fact that though Handel in his oratorio performances usually used theatre singers for his male soloists, he nearly always employed an Italian opera singer for his soprano.

JULIAN HERBAGE

JOAN SUTHERLAND

Although it is now generally accepted that Joan Sutherland has a monopoly on the soprano heroines of the early nineteenth century opera, she is almost as well known as a Handel specialist. As a matter of fact, she has often been quoted as stating that her favorite composers are Handel and Bellini. Apart from many Messiah performances in the principal British musical centers, her Alcina and Rodelinda have been among the high points of recent years in the musical life of Britain's capital. It was as Alcina that she won her first Italian laurels and the sobriquet "La Stupenda" by which she is now known throughout that country. *Alcina* was also the vehicle for her triumphant American debut in Dallas in November 1960. Two of her most successful recordings (on London-Oiseau-Lyre) are *Music of Handel* and *Acis and Galatea*, where she sings the part of Galatea.

One of Miss Sutherland's first engagements outside Great Britain was a Cologne Radio performance of *Alcina* under Ferdinand Leitner. A further Handel triumph came at the Royal Opera House during the 1958-59 season where she appeared as the Israelite Woman in *Samson*, with Jon Vickers in the title role. Her singing of "Let the Bright Seraphim" in this opera drew one of the greatest ovations heard in London since the war. It was, in fact, this success which prompted the management to put on for her the famed Serafin-Zeffirelli production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* which made her an international musical figure overnight.

The remainder is history. The major opera houses and concert halls of the world have thrown open their doors (to say nothing of their arms!) to welcome her. On her concert appearances there is always a representative Handel selection, and in her famous "Art of the Prima Donna" album, one of the most thrilling moments is the aria from *Samson*.

Covent Garden will produce *Alcina* for her in the spring of 1962 and she is also planning to sing in a London revival of the original version of *Julius Caesar* in 1963. She is very proud indeed of her collection of 1st editions of Handel scores.

Miss Sutherland has often expressed her gratitude to Handel for the training in breath control and flexibility which the singing of his music has facilitated for her. She has made a great study of the style in phrasing and ornamentation of his favorite singers and the results have made this music more alive, expressive and accessible to today's public.

One cannot help feeling that Mr. Handel would admire her, too.

GRACE BUMBRY

Grace Bumbry was born in 1937 in St. Louis and attended Boston University and Chicago's Northwestern University. She then went to the Music Academy of the West for futher musical training and became one of the favorite pupils of Lotte Lehmann. She received several important awards, such as a scholarship of the National Association of Negro Musicians, the Marian Anderson Prize, first prize of the auditions of the Metropolitan Opera on the Air and of the California Music Foundation. She was also awarded the John H. Whitney special scholarship prize which enabled her to go to Europe for further studies in Paris with Pierre Bernac, in Vienna and in Rome. She appeared in recital at Wigmore Hall, London, and in Vienna. Miss Bumbry made her debuts in the United States as soloist with the San Francisco and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestras. Her successes won her a considerable number of recital appearances.

The Musical Director of the Basel Opera House, Silvio Varviso, while conducting at the San Francisco Opera, heard Miss Bumbry and invited her to become the leading mezzo-soprano of the Basel Opera. Before starting her Basel engagement, during the spring of 1960, Miss Bumbry made her stage debut at the Grand Opera in Paris as Amneris in "Aida," and was bestowed with such ovations and enthusiastic reviews that she was promptly re-invited for several appearances as Carmen.

Her Paris and Basel successes drew the attention of the European musical world to Miss Bumbry. Wieland Wagner and Wolfgang Sawallisch immediately upon hearing her engaged her for the role of Venus in the new production of "Tannhäuser" at the 1961 Bayreuth Festival. During March 1961 Miss Bumbry appeared with great critical and audience acclaim as Carmen in a series of seven performances of the new production of the opera at the Brussels Royal Opera House, and, in view of her success, a new series of six performances was immediately arranged for November 1961. Her extremely successful Bayreuth debut made her the most talked about singer at the Festival.

KENNETH McKELLAR

Kenneth McKellar was born in Paisley on June 23, 1927. He went to school in Paisley and later studied at Aberdeen University where he received a Bachelor of Science degree. After graduating he won a Caird Scholarship for singing which took him to the Royal College of Music in London for four years. During the course, he won the Henry Leslie Singing Prize which was presented by the Queen Mother.

After leaving the Royal College of Music he toured as principal tenor with the Carl Rosa Opera Company. Later he appeared in revue in Scotland. He was among the Scottish artists given the honor of performing before H.M. Queen Elizabeth and H.R.H. Prince Philip at the Scottish Royal Command Performance in July 1958 and at the end of that same year he began a long and successful run, starring in Richard Tauber's original part in the musical play "Old Chelsea." Also in 1958 he made the first of his successful tours of Canada and the United States which resulted, in 1960, in a guest spot on the Ed Sullivan Show.

It is however, with his numerous recordings and on British radio and television that Kenneth McKellar has scored his greatest personal triumph. In his immensely popular TV series, "A Song for Everyone," he justifies the title with a remarkable range of repertoire, singing lieder, opera, oratorio and Scottish songs.

Known throughout the world as today's foremost Scottish balladeer, he caused "double-takes" among the international record-buying public with his first classical recording, a beautifully rendered recital of *Great Handel Tenor Arias*. His phenomenal success with the music of England's greatest composer led to his choice as tenor solo in London Records' present recording of *Messiah*.

DAVID WARD

Born in Dumbarton, England, in 1922, David Ward trained as a schoolmaster and began his teaching career in Sheffield. His interest in music, however, led him to a scholarship at the Royal College of Music where he studied for three years in the Opera Class under Clive Carey's direction. In 1952 he joined Sadler's Wells chorus and the next year he was promoted to principal bass. His first big part was that of Count Walter in "Luisa Miller" and he made an immediate success. Subsequently, he sang the roles of Friar Laurence in Sutermeister's "Romeo and Juliet," the Bailli in "Werther," the Grand Inquisitor in "Don Carlos," the Orator in "The Magic Flute" and the Commendatore in "Don Giovanni." His next major role was Mephistopheles in "Faust" in which he scored a great success, and this was followed by the title role in "The Flying Dutchman" and the Landgrave in "Tannhäuser."

He took the role of Christ in Bach's "St. John Passion" at the 1954 Aldeburgh Festival, a work which he has since recorded for London Records.

In 1958 Ward appeared at Glyndeborne singing the part of Trulove in "Rake's Progress," and in 1960 was invited back for the role of Lord Walton in "I Puritani" both in Glyndebourne and Edinburgh. That summer he also appeared as a guest artist at Bayreuth.

Guest performances as Pogner at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in 1960 led to a contract there. He sang both Fasolt and Hunding in "The Ring" under Rudolf Kempe in the Autumn of 1960. He was re-engaged for the 1961 Bayreuth Festival and returned to Covent Garden in the Autumn to sing the major role of Morosus in Richard Strauss' "The Silent Woman."

SIR ADRIAN BOULT

Dean of British conductors, Adrian Cedric Boult was born in Chester in 1889 and was educated at Westminster and Christ Church, Oxford. He first attracted attention during the 1918-19 season of the Royal Philharmonic Society for which he conducted several concerts. The following year he joined the staff of the Royal College of Music, later taking charge of the college orchestra.

The early twenties found him touring constantly, introducing British music to continental audiences.

In 1924 he was named conductor of the City of Birmingham Orchestra, a post he held until 1930 when the British Broadcasting Company chose him its Director of Music and Conductor of its newly formed Symphony Orchestra. He molded the B.B.C. Symphony into one of the world's finest orchestras.

He made the first of his many visits to the United States in 1935 as guest conductor of the Boston Symphony. He was knighted in 1937 and entrusted with the music at the Coronation of King George VI and again for Queen Elizabeth II.

In 1939 Sir Adrian returned to the United States and appeared at the New York Wold's Fair, conducting the premiere of Sir Arthur Bliss' *Piano Concerto*.

Sir Adrian terminated his association with the B.B.C. when, in 1950, he reached the age limit stipulated in his contract. He immediately took up the position of Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and, after his resignation in 1957, remained as Chairman of its Advisory Council. He again took charge of the City of Birmingham Orchestra's 1959-60 season and has recently been appointed a Director of the Philomusica of London.

1. OVERTURE

PART ONE

2. RECIT. tenor

Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness:— prepare ye the way of the Lord: make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

3. AIR tenor

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low, the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

4. CHORUS

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

5. RECIT. bass

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts:— Yet once a little while and I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come. The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the mssenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.

6. AIR bass

But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand When He appeareth?
For He is like a refiner's fire.

7. CHORUS

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

8. RECIT. alto

Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name EMMANUEL, God with us.

9. AIR alto and CHORUS

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain: O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

10. RECIT. bass

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

11. AIR bass

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

12. CHORUS

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

27. RECIT. tenor

All they that see Him, laugh Him to scorn; they shoot out their lips and shake their heads saying:—

28. CHORUS

He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him.

29. RECIT. soprano

Thy rebuke hath broken His heart: He is full of heaviness. He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort Him.

30. AIR soprano

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.

31. RECIT. tenor

He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of Thy people was He stricken.

32. AIR tenor

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.

33. CHORUS

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.
Who is the King of Glory?
The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads,, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.
Who is the King of Glory?
The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.

34. RECIT. tenor

Unto which of the Angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son this day have I begotten Thee?

35. CHORUS

Let all the Angels of God worship Him.

36. AIR bass

Thou art gone up on high; Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, yea, even from Thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

37. CHORUS

The Lord gave the word, great was the company of the preachers.

38. AIR soprano

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

39. CHORUS

Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.

40. AIR bass

Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed.

41. CHORUS

Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us.

42. RECIT. tenor

He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision.

43. AIR tenor

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

44. CHORUS

HALLELUJAH: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS, HALLELUJAH!

45. AIR soprano PART THREE

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep.

46. CHORUS

Since by man came death.
By man came also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die.
Even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

47. RECIT. bass

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

48. AIR bass

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.

49. RECIT. alto

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory!

50. DUET alto and tenor

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

51. CHORUS

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

52. AIR soprano

If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?
It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?
It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who makes intercession for us.

53. CHORUS

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.
Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

44:35
38:10
46:50
37:30

165 125

167:05

2:47:05